Opinion

The robots are coming!

All kidding aside. Four thousand robots are already working in this country and 16,000 in Japan.

They come to work on time every morning. In fact, they never leave. They'll work 24 hours a day without complaining, if you want them to.

They don't ask for raises, don't require any fringe benefits and never take a vacation.

You got to admit it sounds good. It sounds so good that General Motors is sold on the idea. It costs GM $6 an hour to run a robot, and $19 an hour to run a UAW worker.

It doesn't take one very long to figure out where those boring, repetitive jobs are going in the future. We'll soon have families of tin-men in our factories.

And what happens to the American worker?? He'd better learn how to make robots.

Dealing with the devil

The United States may be the "Great Satan" in the eyes of Iranians. And treatment of the U.S. Embassy hostages by Iranians will not soon be forgotten. But that doesn't mean the two countries can't do business with each other when it is in their mutual interest.

One result of the hostage release in January, 1981, was the technical lifting of a U.S. ban on imported oil and other goods from Iran. That ban has continued to be observed until recently with the Department of Energy's decision to buy 1.8 million barrels of Iranian oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. DOE's venture is certain to rankle many Americans, but it is a sound economic and political move.

The oil purchased is several dollars below the official OPEC per-barrel price and will be used to build up this country's reserves against the possibility of another cutoff in Mideast oil supplies. Iran is the first member of OPEC to openly break with the cartel's latest drive to curb production and regain control of prices; encouraging Iran to produce more, thereby ability of other OPEC members to attain their goal.

Trade with Iran may seem odious as long as the Ayatollah Khomeini and his band of religious cutthroats are in power. But the aging and ailing ayatollah will not be around for too much longer, according to most reports. The United States won't ensure a more enlightened replacement by improving Iran's trade ties with the west, and helping its economy recover from a war with Iraq.

It will, however, reduce the need for Iran to have closer ties to the Soviet Union. That fate would be worse than having to temporarily contend with the devilish Khomeini and his Revolutionary Guards.

Soviets and the Falklands

It's my guess that by the time you read this, the British will have landed troops in force on the Falklands with the idea of getting their islands back.

The Soviets have been playing quite a role in the Falklands dispute, and we need to pay attention to what it is, so that we are not fooled by their public intentions.

According to news reports from Washington, the Soviets have put 14 satellites in orbit since the Falklands crisis began, each with an orbit to take it over the islands at various times of the day and night. In addition, one of the satellites is a radar vehicle, meaning it can penetrate the cloud cover and tell where the British ships are.

The day the HMS Sheffield was sunk, it was a Soviet satellite that pinpointed her position. That information was relayed to the Argentine government and jets were sent out to sink her. This all happened in less than four hours.

If that's not interference in another country's affairs I don't know what is.

The Soviets are playing an old Mongol game, of providing indispensable intelligence information at a time when Argentina desperately needs it. Right now, Argentina is grateful for the Russian aid.

But the time will soon come when it will not be possible to get Russia's tentacles loose from Argentina without some pain. These favors will be repaid. Russia will demand it.

And our greatest adversary will have a foothold in one of South America's largest countries.

That's our hemisphere, remember!

Agree or not

State financial future uncertain

by S.C. Van Curon

The financial future of Kentucky and its subsidiary governments looks bleak according to a recent study by the Revenue Department.

There are indications that there may be more reductions in federal revenue sharing that already have pinched services of state government in human resources as well as city and county governments.

If the study sends up any clear signal, it is that Kentucky must restructure its moribund tax structure. The study says elasticity needed to equate with inflation and expansion of services has virtually been removed by legislation since 1969.

Revenue Commissioner Ron Geary and Commerce Commissioner proposed a plan to Gov. John Young Brown Jr. too late during this year's legislative session for any action. They proposed a business transaction tax to replace the major part of the tax system for the state, but indicated no change for other branches for government.

On real estate taxes, state and local governments are limited to four percent increases in actual revenue each year regardless of inflation and increased assessments. Property taxes are the mainstays of local governments while they amount to little on the state level.

Other taxes available to cities, counties and school districts are excise or special taxes such as sewer, library, hospital, parking meter, utility, occupation, etc.

Chief sources of revenue for the state have been income, excise, sales, property taxes and fees.

Politics has dictated the reduction in these major sources. For example, in 1970, U.S. Senator Wendell Ford, as lieutenant governor was instrumental in lifting the sales tax from prescription drugs. He was elected governor. During his term, the sales tax was removed from take-home groceries. He was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Lt. Gov. Thelma Stovall called a special session of the General Assembly in 1979 when she was a candidate for governor and House and Senate members were running for office. The sales tax was removed from utilities and revenue increases from property taxes were limited to four percent each year.

Coupled with the downturn in the economy, the strangulation of these sources of revenue make the fiscal future of the state look dim.

The severance tax on coal, enacted in the middle 1960s, has been a new source of revenue, but increases in it have about reached their limit until other revenue sources are increased comparatively.

Kentucky's state income is low, and the surtax was reduced when the sales tax was legislated.

Of course there are other taxes such as gasoline and use tax on automobiles, but these go to the road fund which is also hurting because of the downturn in the economy and the high prices of gasoline.

The state's income tax, both personal and corporate, could stand an increase in comparison with that levied by most other states, but Kentucky has always used these low rates as an incentive for attracting new industry.

While the severance tax on coal was increased regularly as the economy grew, the legislature also has seen fit to divert much of it to counties and away from state government.

Initially, when Ford took the sales tax off groceries, the severance tax was increased to make up for the loss. The important thing to note here though is that coal production has not increased as much as retail sales which makes the loss gap grow as the economy increases.

As some politicians would have the electorate believe when they campaign on "no new taxes," they are absolutely correct for there isn't any kind of tax Kentucky doesn't already levy. There are only three kinds: property, income and excise. There are many more names, but all taxes fall within these three categories. The politicians can increase taxes, but there are no new ones possible.

A study of the state's tax system and recommendations for modernizing it would be an excellent undertaking for the interim committee on Appropriations and Revenue. A recommendation could then be made to the 1984 General Assembly.

Guest Editorial

Federal retirement indexing

by Anthony Harrigan

While the battle of the budget continues, the American people need to gather facts about the country's economic predicament. The politicians aren't very good at presenting those facts.

One of the best sources of factual data on our national situation is a superb article by Peter G. Peterson in the May issue of Reader's Digest. I commend it to readers of this column.

Mr. Peterson is a former Secretary of Commerce who serves as chairman of the board of Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb, the big investment banking firm.

One section of that article deserves special attention, the section on Social Security and government pensions. Mr. Peterson points out that federal outlays for the elderly constitute 27.5 percent of the federal budget, up from 14.4 percent in 1960. By the year 2000, if no change is made, the outlays will account for 35 percent.

The problem is that Social Security is adjusted to the Consumer Price Index. That means Social Security recipients get regular increases even as many Americans lose their jobs or receive reduced wages.

Social Security payments are made irrespective of need and at an age when many of the recipients could continue to engage in productive work. As Mr. Peterson says, "The typical Social Security recipient retiring today will reap six times more in benefits than he paid in; the young worker starting his payroll contribution today will be very fortunate if he receives benefits merely equal to what he pays in."

Mr. Peterson adds that the fairness situation is particularly outlandish when it is applied to federal employee pensions. "Starting at a high proportion of final salary (up to 80 percent of final pay for members of Congress)," he says, "these pensions have been indexed 100 percent twice yearly."

This system is grossly unfair to the vast majority of Americans who have not worked for the federal government. Few private pensions are indexed. Only federal retirees get automatic increases, as they did in recent weeks. Most private pensions also have retirement pay based on much less than 50 percent of final pay.

There's no reason in the world why federal retirees should be treated as a privileged class. There's no reason why they should get automatic increases when other pensioners have to live on a fixed retirement income. This should be changed forthwith. The injustice in this double standard is particularly apparent at a time when the country is in a recession.

Unfortunately, the liberal bloc in Congress is adamantly opposed to cutting out the cost of living increases for federal retirees. The latter are well-organized. Many Congressmen are unwilling to oppose the federal retiree lobby in an election year. Yet justice demands that the unwarranted pension increases be eliminated.

If the nation is to get its economic house in order, it will have to reduce the excessive benefits lavished on Social Security recipients and federal retirees.

Letters from our readers

Bell's side of the rate hike

To The Carlisle Mercury:

Just a line to keep you informed on the status of our current rate request.

As you know, on April 23, 1982 we filed for 66.1 million dollars to cover higher costs of providing telephone service in Kentucky. As part of that request, we explained that we are incurring these additional costs now and need immediate relief. Further, if there was to be any delay in a decision on the overall request, we should be allowed to place interim rates into effect on May 13, 1982.

On May 13, 1982, the Kentucky Public Service Commission issued an order denying the 15.1 million interim request.

The commission's order puts us in an extremely difficult situation. Basically, the PSC has said that even though it knows it costs more to provide phone service today, Bell won't be allowed to cover these higher costs. This decision was made without even hearing our case.

In its order the commission suggests that "restraint" will somehow solve our problems. When the commission urges restraint, it should point to us as an example. We've cut costs as the commission has directed all utilities to do. We've cut 1,200 people from our payroll. And we've radically trimmed our construction program.

The order ignores some important realities about running this business. We've already had to spend $43 million this year to build required phone facilities in Kentucky. It's one thing to urge restraint and say "we're not going to let you cover your costs." It's quite another thing to decide where to cut more deeply and which customers must suffer as a result.

Please do not hesitate to call if I can be of additional assistance.

Carl Herz Jr.
District Manager
South Central Bell

Down Memory Lane

Livestock, chickens running loose

Thursday, May 31, 1962

G.C. Myers was elected president of the Carlisle High School Alumni Association Thursday night. Other officers for 1962-63 are Julian Hammonds and Johnny Fuller, vice presidents, Dianne Ratliff, secretary, M.H. Ruddell Jr., treasurer.

April Elaine Howard, two year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Howard of Turneman Avenue, received injuries when she fell from a second story window of her home.

J.W. Frytman, for many years manager of the county farm, will open a business June 3 known as the Nicholas County Dollar Store.

Supt. Tebay Rose announced the following honor graduates of Carlisle High School for the year 1962: Valedictorian, Carol Clay Caswell, and Salutatorians, Susan Talbert and Judith Whiteley.

Everett Pfantziel Jr. has been named principal of Marshall School in Cynthiana.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. Jess Bach, a daughter, Barbara Lynn, May 24 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Hayhard Baker, a son, Michael Dwayne, May 25 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Knapke, a daughter, Diana Michelle, May 26 at Nicholas County Hospital.

MARRIED — Miss Ruth Johnson Smart and Louis Jacob Elrove, May 20 at First Christian Church in Paris.

DIED — Journey Nichols, 50, Lexington, Friday at the Veterans Hospital. — Mrs. Agnes Bishop Owens, 71, wife of William Owens, Thursday at home in Berry. — John Slagg, 69, Atlanta, Ga., Friday.

Thursday, May 28, 1942

A total of $33 was raised and turned over to the national authorities for the Army and Navy Relief Fund by Mrs. Elizabeth Wyrick, manager of the Lyric Theatre.

Complaints which have been filed with the local city officials drew a warning from Chief Police Malcolm Armstrong in which he declared that persons allowing livestock and chickens to run at large within the city limits are violating an ordinance and can be prosecuted.

MARRIED — Miss Tempa Gaunce and Hubbard Malcolm Endicott, Tuesday in Midway.

DIED — Mrs. Tommie Florence, 63, wife of George Florence, Friday at home near Morning Glory. — J.C. McConaughhay, Saturday in Pawnee County.

Thursday, June 2, 1922

Twenty-eight carloads of live poultry have been shipped by the Blue Grass Produce Co. this year, an average of over a carload a week.

The result of the 1922 school census in the 41 school districts in Nicholas County shows a grand total of 2,273 children of school age in the county.

Miss Lillie Cecil Taylor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Taylor of this city, has been named by Miss Elizabeth Fox, queen-elect of the Centre College carnival to be held on June 16, as one of the 15 young women who officiate in the ceremonial and other council events.

Raymond King has bought the contract and truck for carrying mail between Carlisle and Mt. Sterling and took charge of the route last week.

The Carlisle Mercury
(USPS 090-820)
Established 1867
Phone (606) 289-2464
Published every Thursday at 234 Locust Street, Carlisle, Nicholas County, Kentucky 40311. Postage paid at Carlisle.

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Jim B. Wanke ..... Editor
(Mrs.) Katherine T. Fisher ..... Managing Editor
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Op-Ed page

Is it a bird? A plane? . . . No, it's Super State Feathermerchant!

You understand better the power structure in state government after reading the following job description in the Kentucky Municipal League's publication. When dealing with state government officials and employees, it is well to keep this guide handy for easy reference:

A goodly number of folks in any capitol city work for state government.

"I'm with the state," they tell you, but that really doesn't go very far in telling you what they do and what kind of power they have.

As a public service, I'd like to explain how much power each person in government has, depending on the position held. I base it on a letter I received the other day.

✓ Gubernatorial adviser: Leaps tall buildings in a single bound, is more powerful than a locomotive, is faster than a speeding bullet, walks on water and gives policy to God.

✓ Cabinet secretary: Leaps short buildings with a single bound, is more powerful than a switch engine, is just as fast as a speeding bullet, walks on water if the sea is calm and talks to God.

✓ Division Director: Leaps short buildings with a running start and a favorable wind, is almost as powerful as a switch engine, is faster than a BB, walks on water in an indoor swimming pool and talks with God if special request is approved.

✓ Administrative Assistant: Barely clears a quonset hut, loses big of war with locomotive, can fire a speeding bullet, swims well and is occasionally addressed by God.

✓ Department head: Makes high marks on the wall when trying to leap buildings, is run over by a locomotive, can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self-injury, dog paddles and talks to animals.

✓ Officer supervisor: Runs into buildings, recognizes a locomotive two out of three times, is not issued ammunition, can stay afloat with a life preserver and talks to walls.

✓ Assistant supervisor: Falls over doorstep when trying to enter buildings, says "Look at the choo-choo," wets himself with water pistol, plays in mud puddles and mumbles to himself.

✓ Secretary and clerk typist: Lifts buildings and walks under them, kicks locomotives off the track, catches speeding bullets in her teeth and eats them, freezes water with a single glance and is God.

— RM —

History proves that views of science by eminent men are often eminently wrong, according to an article by Reuters News Service. Take, for instance:

American engineer Robert Fulton tried to explain to Napoleon Bonaparte how the British fleet could be destroyed by steam-powered ships.

Back come the incredulous reply: "What, sir, you would make a ship sail against the wind and currents by lighting a bonfire under her decks? I pray you excuse me. I have no time to listen to such nonsense."

A British parliamentary committee dismissed Thomas Edison's incandescent lamp as "unworthy of the attention of practical and scientific men."

Earlier this century, the appearance of railroad trains travelling at 15 miles per hour prompted an angry letter from the governor of New York to President Andrew Jackson, saying: "The almighty

certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed."

A recurring theme of the collection of skepticism about inventions: Lord Kelvin, a physicist and president of Britain's prestigious Royal Society, stated with evident confidence at the end of the last century that "radio has no future."

U. S. Admiral William Leahy held more definite views on the atomic bomb. In 1945, he told President Harry S. Truman: "The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives."

In 1899, the director of the U. S. Patent office urged President William McKinley to shut down the patent office because "everything that can be invented has been invented."

— RM —

After having been raised in a family of three children and after having married a man who was raised in a family of three children, Jan Cunningham and her husband, of Chicago, now have three children, so she now feels qualified to speak on three-kid families. And particularly just how each of the three kids will respond to questions, commands and casual statements. I know what shh means because I am a product of a three-kid family myself. The way it goes is:

Teacher: "You got a D on your last test."
First born: "I'm sorry. I'll do better next time."
Second born: "I woulda got a A if my pencil hadn't busted."
Third born: "What a relief! I was sure I flunked it!"

Parents: "Where should we go on vacation this year?"
First born: "I'd like to go to Gramma's. All by myself."
Second born: "Anyplace that has an indoor pool and room service."
Third born: "Someplace different. Like China, maybe."

Aunt Min: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"
First born: "A doctor."
Second born: "Rich and single."
Third born: "Do you have to go to college to work in the circus?"

Sales clerk: "That'll be $1.04, including tax."
First born: "Here you are, even change."
Second born (to friend): "Got an extra quarter I can borrow?"
Third born: "Charge it."

Neighbor: "Who broke my window?"
First born: "I did."
Second born: "He did."
Third born: "They did."

Grandparent: "What do you want for your birthday?"
First born: "A bike."
Second born: "A moped."
Third born: "A '69 Corvette with mag wheels."

Best friend: "Go ahead, I dare you."
First born: "I gotta go home now."
Second born: "I would, but I gotta go home now."
Third born: "You first."

Waitress: "Okay, what'll you have?"
First born: "I'll have the 'draft plane' with milk."
Second born: "Prime rib, rare, chef's salad with the house dressing and a lime switzler, whatever that is."
Third born: "Hamburger, fries and a Coke."

Mother: "Whose turn is it take out the garbage?"
First born: "I did it yesterday."
Second born: "Not mine."
Third born: "You expect me to go out in this weather?"

Doctor: "This won't hurt a bit."
First born: "Ouch!"
Second born: "If you don't mind, I'd like a second opinion."
Third born: "If it does, we'll sue."

Onward, upward.

An editor's random thoughts...

by Warren R. Fisher Sr.
May 30, 1937

Mr. George L. Willis Sr.s talented Shelby County writer, says in the Shelby Sentinel:

"Editor Fisher of The Carlisle Mercury writing the first days of the last week in April refers to a cat bird friend of his that had already announced to him the real arrival of spring. That's too early for a cat bird, unless for some reason they come here around that way from the South. When a little boy in rural Shelby County many years ago, the writer one May day was called to one side of the yard by a spotted parent, who pointed to the top of a big, and even then very old cedar tree and said, 'Listen, see that bird, hear him go like a cat. Well, he or some ancestor of his has come there either the first or second day of May every year since before you were born.' The act was rediscovered there for many years, and later, the first time I saw any cat bird any spring weather it was there in the cemetery at Arlington, in front of the library of Congress in the fields of Virginia or the Downs of England. I always noted that it was May day, or later, and I knew that one of his kind, if no longer calling from the old cedar tree at home, was at least in the piney branches of the trees, in the old family burying ground nearby."

On Sunday, April 25, I wrote for this column: "This morning I have heard the very voice of Spring. My cat bird, that slim, gray aristocrat of the feathered host, is home from his sojournings in warmer climes." And he was. But errors typographical and otherwise have been so frequent in this print-shop of late, that I am forced to quote the authorities recorded in Dr. W.D. Funkhouser's "Wild Life in Kentucky" to confirm my eyesight and hearing in the matter. On page 261 of Dr. Funkhouser's valuable book the following appears under Dumetella carolinensis Linn, or Catbird:

"Records: From every county in the state. Fayette Co. April-November (W.D.F.); ¤Nelson County earliest arrival April 19, 1921; latest departure October 10, 1920; four fresh eggs May 16, 1916, five fresh eggs May 11, 1921; young leaving nest June 30, 1921 (B.J. Blincoe); Lexington earliest arrival April 16, 1916 (C.K. Morrell); April 18, 1922 (Mrs. W.D. Funkhouser); Bowling Green, April 14-October 25 (G. Wilson); Harlan County April 27, 1923 (V.Dodge and W.D.F.)."

For me, as for Mr. Willis this sweet cousin of the mocking bird, and his equal in some respects as a songster, always means May and the high-tide of Spring. Then the cat bird is nesting and it is in the performed twilights of this month that he sings his sweetest song to the mate, curved like a slim, gray bow over her blue-green eggs in some nearby bush. But the cat bird does make his appearance in Kentucky in late April nearly always.

*****

Recently a mocking bird has been making night beautiful with his song near my home. When I hear the song of the mocker at night I always think of the poem by Walt Whitman — "Out Of The Cradle Endlessly Rocking" — into the metrical mechanics of which he cunningly wove the rhythm of this bird's song:

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.
Two together!
Winds blow south or winds blow north,
Days come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time
While we two keep together.

So the prince of feathered songsters to his nesting mate, "crouched on her nest, silent, with bright eyes."

Till of a sudden
Maybe killed, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.
And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama
Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

But you should read it; it has caught as no other of the hundreds of poems celebrating the singing of the mocker the lilt of his song.

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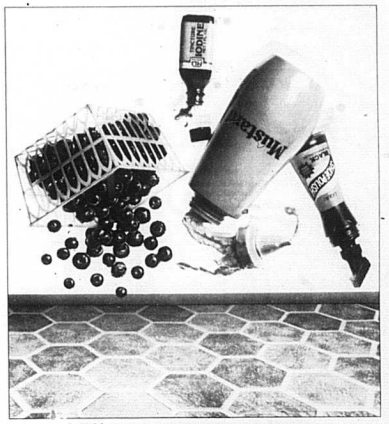

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In this corner.... by Jim Butler Wanke

The military hasn't changed much

I am a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve.

What that means to me is that in exchange for one weekend a month of Navy duty and two weeks on cruise in the summertime, they will give me a small retirement check when I reach age 60 and have at least 20 years of service.

Oh...there's one other thing. If we have a war and I get called up, I have to give my life for my country, if asked. Maybe "if told" would be a better way of describing it. Of course, I don't intend to do that. I'm going to do what Gen. George Patton recommended and "make that other xxxx die for his country."

We are trained to go on active duty within a very short period of time, a few days or less, and already know our job.

From the country's point of view it's a pretty good deal. There's about a hundred thousand of us in the Naval Reserve that could be called up on short notice and because of our prior experience, would be able to go to work immediately.

Of course, none of us wants it to happen. But we're taking the risk in exchange for a few things like money, insurance policies, food and two weeks every year on a small Portuguese volcanic rock in the Atlantic called the Azores. In addition, I am one of those who believes in defending his country... no bull.

So this last weekend was my time to serve Uncle Sam. Ordinarily, I would drive up to the Huntington, W.Va. airport (about 100 miles one way) on Friday evening at my own expense and catch a Navy airlift to Patuxent River, Maryland, a Naval air station on southern Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay.

Why do they send an airplane all the way out to Kentucky to get a bunch of us guys? Because that's how hard up the Navy is for experienced people.

Few others want to do this crazy duty, except for us crusty old ex-servicemen, who figure the social security system will be down the drain by the time we retire.

Ordinarily we would arrive at Patuxent River, Maryland Naval Air Station, by 9:30 p.m. on Friday, after some linens, a bunk, a locker, and crash for the night.

This Friday night was different. At 7 o'clock there was no airplane at Huntington. Not too unusual, because very often they are late. But when 8 p.m. come and no aircraft, we knew something might be haywire, so we called Patuxent River.

"Gosh, we don't know where they are," the Duty Officer told us. "They left on time. But they did have to go to Louisville and Lexington first to get a bunch of guys...so maybe they're just late."

We accepted that until about 9:30 p.m., when we called again and were informed that the Navy aircraft was stuck on the ground in Lexington with a bad generator.

At 11:30 p.m. we were told that the aircraft apparently would leave Lexington at midnight.

At midnight we were told by Indianapolis control that the aircraft did leave Lexington at midnight.

At 1 a.m. we were told by the pilot of the aircraft (we overheard the radio conversation) that he was not going to stop in Huntington because he was afraid he would not get off the ground again, with the bad generator.

At midnight-16 I called my wife to tell her I would be home at about 2 a.m. and not to shoot through the door with the shotgun if she heard somebody out there about then. (We live in the country.) Whereupon she informed me she had promised her sister that she would visit her this weekend and did I know that.

She also told me that this time she was going because the last two times the aircraft didn't show up she had called up her sister and told her she wasn't coming.

Suffice to say that when time comes for me to draw my military retirement it will not be granted for serving my country, but for "attempting" to serve.

Which is how that old World War II statement got started, "they also serve who only sit and wait."

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